

What is claimed is:

1. A method of checking the meaning of a word in an electronic document comprising the steps of:
 - retrieving said word to be checked from said document;
 - 5 determining whether said word has been inadvertently included in said document and has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in said document.
2. The method of claim 1, further including a step of designating words that have a meaning that is potentially inappropriate by changing a value of a status field for such words in an
 - 10 electronic dictionary.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the status field for each of the words can have one of N values, where $N > 2$.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein those words that have a potentially inappropriate meaning can be identified without input from a user of such electronic dictionary.
- 15 5. The method of claim 2, wherein an identification of potentially inappropriate words can take place at or about the time the electronic dictionary is first generated.
6. The method of claim 1, further including a step of generating an alert indicating that such word is potentially inappropriate.
7. The method of claim 6, further including a step of permitting a user to change the value
 - 20 of the status flag for such word.
8. The method of claim 1, further including a step of verifying the spelling of such word.
9. The method of claim 7, further including a step of generating a list of substitute words in the event such word is mis-spelled, and if a one of the substitute words is selected in lieu of such word, determining whether the substituted word has a meaning that is potentially
 - 25 inappropriate for use in a text document.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein a list of documents is checked, and a list of potentially inappropriate words in such documents is generated.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein said word is checked substantially immediate in time after it is input into said document by a user.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said word has a first meaning in a first context, and a second meaning in a second context, and further including a step of determining whether said word has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in either of the first or second contexts.

5 13. The method of claim 2, further including a step of specifying a threshold value which the status field must exceed in order for said word to be identified as potentially inappropriate.

14. A method of permitting a user to simultaneously check both the spelling and meaning of words in an electronic document comprising the steps of:

[a] retrieving a word to be spell checked and word checked from said document; and

[b] determining whether said word has been spelled correctly; and

[c] when said word has been spelled incorrectly, presenting a first list of alternative words to said user as replacements for said word, and permitting said user to select a first replacement word for said word; and

[d] determining whether the meaning of said word or replacement word has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in a text document; and

[e] when said word has been designated as potentially inappropriate, presenting a second list of alternative words to said user as replacements for said word, and permitting said user to select a second replacement word for said word.

15. The method of claim 14, further including a step (f): permitting said user to select said word, the first replacement word, or the second replacement word.

16. The method of claim 14, further including a step (f): repeating steps [d] and [e] as necessary so that a word is selected that is not designated as potentially inappropriate, or said user is permitted to select a word by manual override.

17. The method of claim 14, further including a step of identifying those words that have a meaning that is potentially inappropriate by changing a value of a status field for such words in an electronic dictionary.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein those words that have a potentially inappropriate meaning can be identified without input from a user of such electronic dictionary.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein an identification of potentially inappropriate words can take place at or about the time the electronic dictionary is first generated.

20. The method of claim 14, further including a step of generating an alert indicating that such word is potentially inappropriate.

21. The method of claim 14, further including a step of permitting a user to change the value of the status flag for such word.

22. The method of claim 14, wherein said word is checked substantially immediate in time after it is input into said document by a user.
23. The method of claim 14, wherein said word has a first meaning in a first context, and a second meaning in a second context, and further including a step of determining whether
5 said word has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in either of the first or second contexts.

24. A method of word checking an electronic document generated by a word processing program under control of a user of said program, said method comprising the steps of:
storing word-checking status information for said document, including a table containing potentially inappropriate words used in said document;
5 monitoring interaction between said user and said word processing program to identify idle editing periods;
locating potentially inappropriate words in said document during the idle editing periods, and updating the word checking status information in response thereto as needed.
25. The method of claim 24, wherein the table includes information pertaining to the
10 location in said document of any words that are determined to be potentially inappropriate.
26. The method of claim 24, wherein a check of the spelling of such word is also performed.
27. The method of claim 24, wherein said word has a first meaning in a first context, and a second meaning in a second context, and further including a step of determining whether
15 said word has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in either of the first or second contexts.
28. The method of claim 24, further including a step of permitting a user to specify a threshold which must be exceeded in order for said word to be identified as potentially inappropriate.

29. A method of automatically word checking an electronic document as it is generated by a user of a word processing program, comprising the steps of:

monitoring data input by said user during a data input period that is intended to be included as a word in said document;

determining whether the word is potentially inappropriate for use in said document;

when the word is determined to be potentially inappropriate, alerting said user;

wherein a result of said word checking is communicated to said user with substantially minimal delay after the data input period for the word.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein said result is communicated before said user has completed data input during a subsequent data input period intended for a subsequent word to be included in said document.

31. The method of claim 29, wherein when the word is determined to be potentially inappropriate said user is precluded from inputting additional words in said document until corrective action has been taken for such word.

32. The method of claim 29, wherein a check of the spelling of such word is also performed, and wherein the result of this spelling check is communicated to said user with substantially minimal delay after the data input period for the word.

33. The method of claim 32, further including a step of generating a list of substitute words in the event such word is mis-spelled, and if a one of the substitute words is selected in lieu of such word, determining whether the substituted word has a meaning that is potentially inappropriate for use in a text document.

34. The method of claim 29, wherein said word has a first meaning in a first context, and a second meaning in a second context, and further including a step of determining whether said word has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in either of the first or second contexts.

35. The method of claim 29, further including a step of permitting a user to specify a threshold which must be exceeded in order for said word to be identified as potentially inappropriate.

36. A method of generating an electronic version of a dictionary comprising the steps of:
inputting data in electronic form to create a set of words in computer readable form for
said dictionary; and
providing a status field associated for each of such words, which status field indicates
whether such word has a meaning that is potentially inappropriate for use in an electronic
document.
37. The method of claim 36, wherein the status field is modifiable, and further including a
step of modifying the status field in accordance with the meaning of its associated word.
38. The method of claim 36, wherein the status field can be modified to have any one of N
possible values, where $N \geq 2$, and where N corresponds to a degree of potential
inappropriateness for a word associated with such status field.
39. The method of claim 36, wherein each status field is associated with the meaning of such
word in a first context, and including a further step of providing at least one additional
status field for indicating whether such word has a meaning that is potentially
inappropriate for use in a second context.

40. An electronic system for permitting a user to check the meaning of words in an electronic document, said system including:

a system memory for storing a word checking software module;

a processing device for executing the word checking software module;

wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the following operations:

(i) retrieving said words to be checked from said document;

(ii) determining whether said word has been inadvertently included in said document and has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in said document.

41. The system of claim 40, further including an electronic dictionary for storing said words, and wherein the word checking software module designates words that have a meaning that is potentially inappropriate by changing a value of a status field for such words.

42. The system of claim 41, wherein the status field for each of the words can have one of N values, where $N > 2$.

43. The system of claim 41, wherein those words that have a potentially inappropriate meaning can be identified without input from said user.

44. The system of claim 41, wherein an identification of potentially inappropriate words can take place at or about the time the electronic dictionary is first generated.

45. The system of claim 40, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of generating an alert indicating that such word is potentially inappropriate.

46. The system of claim 45, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of permitting said user to change the value of the status flag for such word.

47. The system of claim 40, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of verifying the spelling of said words.

48. The system of claim 47, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of generating a list of substitute words in the event such word is mis-spelled, and if a one of the substitute words is selected in lieu of such word, determining whether the substituted word has a meaning that is potentially inappropriate for use in a text document.

49. The system of claim 40, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of checking a set of documents, and generating a list of potentially inappropriate words in such documents.

50. The system of claim 40, wherein said word is checked substantially immediate in time after it is input into said document by a user.

51. The system of claim 40, wherein said word has a first meaning in a first context, and a second meaning in a second context, and wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of determining whether said word has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in either of the first or second contexts.

52. The system of claim 40, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of specifying a threshold value which the status field must exceed in order for said word to be identified as potentially inappropriate.

53. An article of manufacture comprising:

an electronic dictionary including a set of words and an associated status field for each of the words for indicating a level of potential inappropriateness for such word when used in an electronic text document;

5 a word checking routine executable by a computing device and for checking whether words in the electronic text document are inadvertently included, and which routine is configured to perform the following operations:

[a] retrieving a word to be word checked from an electronic text document; and

10 [b] accessing the electronic dictionary to determine whether the level of potential inappropriateness of such word exceeds a threshold value specified for such document; and

wherein the electronic dictionary and word checking routine are embodied in a computer readable media.

54. The article of claim 53, further including a spell checking routine for determining
15 whether such word has been spelled correctly.

55. The article of claim 54, wherein the spell checking routine also presents a first list of alternative words as replacements for the word when it is mis-spelled, and permits a first replacement word to be substituted for the word.

56. The article of claim 55, wherein the word checking routine is also configured to
20 determine whether the meaning of the replacement word exceeds the threshold value for such document.

57. The article of claim 53, wherein the word checking routine is also configured to permit a user of the routine to change the value of a status field for any words in the electronic dictionary.

25 58. The article of claim 53, wherein the word checking routine is also configured to check words substantially immediate in time after they are input into the document by a user.

59. The article of claim 53, wherein the electronic dictionary has a first status field for indicating a level of appropriateness for a word in a first context, and a second status field for indicating a level of appropriateness for such word in a second context, and the word checking routine is configured to check whether any words have a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in either of the first or second contexts.

60. The article of claim 53, wherein the computer readable media includes any of the following: a floppy disk, a hard disk, a CD-ROM, a magnetic tape, or a non-volatile semiconductor memory.

61. A system for permitting a user to check the meaning of words in an electronic document, said system including:

a computer readable storage structure for storing a word checking software module, such module being incorporated as part of a word processing program that can be executed by a computer processing device;

wherein the word checking software module is configured such that when it is executed by the computer processing device it can perform the following operations:

- (i) retrieving said words to be checked from said document;
- (ii) determining whether said word is inadvertently included and has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in said document.

62. The system of claim 61, further including an electronic dictionary for storing said words, and wherein the word checking software module designates words that have a meaning that is potentially inappropriate by changing a value of a status field for such words.

63. The system of claim 62, wherein the status field for each of the words can have one of N values, where $N > 2$.

64. The system of claim 61, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of generating an alert indicating that such word is potentially inappropriate.

65. The system of claim 61, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of permitting said user to change the value of the status flag for such word.

66. The system of claim 61, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of verifying the spelling of said words.

67. The system of claim 66, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of generating a list of substitute words in the event such word is mis-spelled, and if a one of the substitute words is selected in lieu of such word, determining whether the substituted word has a meaning that is potentially inappropriate for use in a text document.

68. The system of claim 61, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of checking a set of documents, and generating a list of potentially inappropriate words in such documents.

69. The system of claim 61, wherein said word is checked substantially immediate in time after it is input into said document by a user.

70. The system of claim 61, wherein said word has a first meaning in a first context, and a second meaning in a second context, and wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of determining whether said word has a particular meaning that has been designated as potentially inappropriate for use in either of the first or second contexts.

71. The system of claim 61, wherein the word checking software module is configured such that it can perform the additional operation of specifying a threshold value which the status field must exceed in order for said word to be identified as potentially inappropriate.

72. An electronic dictionary embodied in computer readable form for use in a word processing program, said dictionary including:
- a set of words represented in computer readable form;
 - a status field associated for each of such words, which status field facilitates a determination of whether such word, when inadvertently included in an electronic document, has a meaning that is potentially inappropriate for use in such document.
73. The dictionary of claim 72, wherein the status field is modifiable.
74. The dictionary of claim 73, wherein the status field has one of N possible values, where $N > 2$, and where N corresponds to a degree of potential inappropriateness for a word associated with such status field.
75. The dictionary of claim 73, wherein each status field is associated with the meaning of such word in a first context, and including at least one additional status field for indicating whether such word has a meaning that is potentially inappropriate for use in a second context.

76. A method of checking the meaning of a word in an electronic document comprising the steps of:
- retrieving said word to be checked from said document;
 - determining whether said word has a particular meaning that is likely to be offensive to persons intended to read such text document.
77. The method of claim 76, further including a step of designating words that have a meaning that is likely to be offensive by changing a value of a status field for such words in an electronic dictionary.
78. The method of claim 77, wherein the status field for each of the words can have one of N values, where $N > 2$.
79. The method of claim 76, further including a step of generating an alert indicating that such word is likely to be offensive.
80. The method of claim 76, further including a step of verifying the spelling of such word.
81. The method of claim 80, further including a step of generating a list of substitute words in the event such word is mis-spelled, and if a one of the substitute words is selected in lieu of such word, determining whether the substituted word has a meaning that is likely to be offensive.
82. The method of claim 76, wherein said word is checked substantially immediate in time after it is input into said document by a user.